

**TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – CHANGE OF
AUTHORIZATION FOR AMERICAN PATHWAYS UNIVERSITY**

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends a status change for American Pathways University from holding Probationary Authorization to Full Authorization.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, commonly referred to as the Degree Authorization Act, which sets out the terms under which certain types of institutions¹ may offer degrees or degree credits. Persons or organizations that violate the provisions of the statute are subject to legal penalties.

All private colleges and universities, out-of-state public colleges and universities, seminaries and bible colleges are required to register with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) and to meet criteria in CCHE Policy Section I Part J, Degree Authorization Act, in order to be granted authorization to offer degrees within Colorado. Such authorization must be received by the institution prior to: offering any program of instruction, academic credits, or degrees; opening a place of business; soliciting students or enrollees; or offering educational support services.

The Commission administers the Degree Authorization Act by determining an institution's eligibility to operate pursuant to statute and CCHE policy. Policy requires Commission action for institutions to be authorized at any level.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

American Pathways University (APU) was granted Probationary Authorization on May 13, 2004. In 2006, American Pathways University officially requested that authorization be extended. Staff recommended and the Executive Director approved the requested extension of probationary authorization. This extension was based on APU's continued correspondence with DHE, demonstrated progress towards accreditation, and the scheduled site visit by the American Association of Liberal Education (AALE).

¹ (1) Colorado publicly supported colleges and universities; (2) properly accredited private colleges and universities; (3) postsecondary seminaries and bible colleges; and (4) private occupational schools authorized by the Division of Private Occupational Schools.

At its annual meeting on June 4, 2010, the AALE's Board of Trustees voted to confer the status of Institutional Accreditation on American Pathways University for a period of two years, ending June 30, 2012. In order for AALE to ensure that teaching and learning goals are met as outlined in the University's response to the Site Evaluation Visit Report, the Board requires APU to submit, in addition to annual reports, an interim report before August 15, 2012 in which the institution addresses its progress on incorporating and adapting the site visit team's recommendations. Upon review of this interim report, the Board may renew APU's institutional accreditation for an additional three years.

According to the notification of accreditation letter from AALE, APU represents a laudable and innovative attempt to provide liberal education to the urban poor of a large metropolitan area. The letter commended APU for its emphasis on providing students with a strong foundation of self-knowledge, individual responsibility, an understanding of the Western intellectual tradition, and practical degree skills. If success and sustainability continue, the AALE Board believes that APU could become a model to be imitated in metropolitan areas around the country.

In addition to this accreditation, APU is seeking institutional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. An initial candidacy site visit is scheduled for February 2011.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the authorization status change to Full Authorization for American Pathways University.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-2-103.3